

**I DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' CHURCH**  
**Ministry of Music Sunday –March 30, 2014 –Matthew 18: 19-20**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

There is a local church that has a large screen in its sanctuary and on Sunday morning it projects an image of its pastor preaching from another location and that's the sermon. This got me to thinking that I could record two sermons a week, leave Washington over the cold months in the winter, and you could project a hologram of me preaching in the pulpit for about 3 to 4 months while I work on my tan in Florida and you all shovel snow. Great idea, right? But I think then you might begin to consider ways of reducing the operating budget, decide you could just as easily download a computer application, an AP, of some great preacher preaching –David Jeremiah, Joel Osteen, Billy Graham, or whoever—and you could decide –“WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' PREACHER! And it costs a lot less, too. I am not certain that other preacher of the church where they just show his image on the screen has really thought through the ramifications of this!

Anyway, I begin with an apology to teachers everywhere, to English teachers in particular, and my Mother, a former English teacher in particular, for my sermon title –“I DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' CHURCH.” Obviously, its bad grammar; it is unworthy of coming from this sanctuary; but I hope to redeem myself by the end of this sermon. So on this Ministry of Music Sunday I am bold to ask –Do we or do we not need no stinkin' preacher and do we or do we not need no stinkin' church??????

I mean, think about it. If projecting a preacher's image up on a screen catches on, a lot of churches might opt for no actual preacher. After all, you would get a perfect sermon (after 25 takes) not an imperfect one; you'd get a great sermon by one of the foremost preachers in the nation every Sunday. When you'd tire of David Jeremiah you could opt for Charles Stanley. And a \$5 computer application is a lot less than paying for a real live preacher. But then, of course, people would also figure out that they could do the same thing from the comfort of their living room, in their pajamas, lying around on Saturday morning instead of Sunday morning when it fits their schedule. Sounds great to me. They wouldn't need a big, impressive sanctuary or a Covenant Center in order to worship they would just need a computer. I DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' CHURCH BUILDING. I don't need to pay to heat it or maintain it.

And as far as music goes you can download an AP that has the Mormon Tabernacle Choir singing. You know, project an image of a 500 voice choir singing the Hallelujah Chorus up front here in the chancel area. Costs \$50 a year. Or for that matter, why don't you just download I-tunes on your computer at home and listen to your favorite kind of Christian Music whenever you want to –Resolves the worship wars doesn't it?—you can download traditional music when you want it or contemporary music when you feel like it. WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' CHOIR. WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' MUSIC DIRECTOR. WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN ORGANIST. WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN PRAISE TEAM. We can have what we want, when we want it and where we want it. We don't need the stinkin' inconvenience of having to gather at a particular time to worship God. We don't have to maintain a pipe organ; we don't have to heat the Covenant Center; we don't have to replace carpeting. WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' CHURCH.

And our kids can just download an AP that gives them age appropriate downloadable Christian Ed information. Christianity is just a bunch of information that we endeavor to download into people's heads afterall, right? WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR. WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS. WE DON'T NEED NO SUNDAY SCHOOL ROOMS.

And an actual pastor doesn't need to visit you in your hospital room any more. There's that lovely large television screen in the room now and I'm sure somebody will put together a computer program of perfect pastoral care responses to whatever you say to the screen. You can pick whichever pastor you want to answer you with the perfect computer generated pastoral care responses. I want Billy Graham to comfort me. Why not? And the prayer at the end is perfect and beautiful. WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' PASTOR...

Except, except, except for the fact that it is GOD who chooses how He transmits the faith to people. And His choice is by way of Covenant. His choice is that worship and study and pastoral care is all transmitted personally in a relationship. There is a vertical relationship with HIM, a covenant where God reaches out to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. And then He places us in a covenantal relationship, personal, face-to-face, eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart with one another. This is our horizontal relationship with one another. The two relationships, the vertical and the horizontal, come together to form the cross. Through the CROSS of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are brought into a saving covenantal relationship with God –through the cross, through Christ's death at Calvary the distance between us and God created by our sin is brought together. And through that same cross, we are brought together with a relationship and covenant created by the precious blood of Jesus. No vertical relationship through Jesus, no relationship with God. Ahhhhhhhhhh, but no relationship with one another in covenant and in the church, then that is proof positive that we have no saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. There are a lot of people out there who think they don't need no stinkin' church, they can be a Christian apart from the church, they can believe in God in their head. I don't need anybody else to believe in God, they think. They are wrong and they are dead wrong and they are eternally dead wrong. No salvation apart from a covenantal relationship in the Body of Christ which is the church. None.

Our scripture from Matthew 18 is on point. Jesus says: *"For wherever two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* (Matthew 18: 20) Notice, He doesn't say when I show up then people begin gathering. No, Jesus says wherever two or more gather together in my name, I show up and am in the midst of. When there is a personal, covenantal relationship between people in whom the Lord Jesus Christ dwells, and they gather together as the church in His name, THEN, and only then, Jesus promises that *"I am in the midst of them."* Whenever we gather together for worship or prayer or study (that's the horizontal relationship, the covenantal relationship with one another as the church) THEN promises Jesus, *"I am in the midst of them"* (that's the vertical relationship, the covenantal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ). No horizontal relationship as the church together, then there is no presence of Jesus in the midst, no vertical relationship with God either. No horizontal, no vertical; no vertical then no horizontal either. What this means is that indeed we do need the church...

We do need a preacher who gets down on his knees and in fear and trembling asks the Lord God to lead, guide and direct him as he puts together, lead by the Holy Spirit, exactly the right sermon, at exactly the right moment, for exactly the people whom God will assemble on exactly that day. No downloadable AP substitutes for a real live preacher on his knees in prayer. We do need a Choir who practices every week because we need to see on your faces the truth of the words and the music you sing; we need to see the faith in your heart as you are singing from your soul about Jesus. We do need a Christian Educator and Sunday School Teachers, because CE isn't just a downloadable AP of a boatload of information; no, those children need to see on your faces the love for God you hold in your heart. Faith is caught more than taught and people need to see and relate to real live people in order to have a life giving, personal relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We do need an actual, real live pastor to hold our hand and to pray with us, that we can look directly in the eyes, as we tell you that God is with you and

He will never leave you nor forsake you. No computer screen substitutes for a real, live pastor taking your hand and making you feel as if it is Jesus Christ Himself who is taking your hand. Well, gloriosky, I guess we do need the church, no matter how human, imperfect and stinkin' from time to time it may be. You know the phrase (and this is for those English teachers in our midst) I DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' CHURCH actually has a double negative in it. "Don't need NO..." is a double negative. And if my recall is correct a double negative cancels out both negatives and becomes a positive. So it actually means, we DO need a stinkin' church. WE do need one another. And we do need a life giving relationship with a life giving Savior that can only be had in the context of a real live living church which the Lord Jesus died to bring into being.

Beloved, we better get our act together. Church of the Covenant, we better participate. We better invite others. We better understand the importance of worshipping together. We better understand the importance of a real live Christian Educator. We better give to make sure there's a roof on this building. We better give to support an expensive proposition –that all of this that we see around us is essential for salvation and for having a saving relationship with God and a saving relationship with one another. Because there are great forces at work in our society right now whispering the lie to us and to those outside the church –"I DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' CHURCH'. But alas, my beloved, in order to get to heaven, the truth is that we DO! Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*